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## IMB head: CP critical to missions effort

DALLAS (BP) — Without Cooperative Program (CP) support, Southern Baptists would not have the International Mission Board (IMB), the largest evangelical mission entity in existence, Tom Elliff, the IMB's new president, told the Florida Baptist Witness after his unanimous election by trustees meeting on March 16 in Dallas.

"We wouldn't have our 5,000 boots on the ground," Elliff said of the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' primary funding channel for missions and ministry. "We wouldn't have our International Mission Board if it wasn't for that."

Asked whether the Cooperative Program, which was created 86 years ago, remains effective in getting funds to the international mission field, Elliff said, "I do not believe that the CP is antiquated."

Elliff had said in his acceptance speech that Southern Baptists "cannot fulfill the Great Commission without being consumed with the Great Commission theme in the days ahead," but also "the International Mission Board does not operate in a vacuum."

With reference to the Cooperative Program, Elliff told trustees, "[T]he simple truth behind CP [is] that we learned a long time ago we can do things together better than we can alone, so churches [that] give regularly through CP and then the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering [are] giving beyond themselves."

Elliff pledged, "by God's grace and your prayers and the heart commitment of Southern Baptists everywhere," to introduce a plan at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Phoenix in June to partner with local churches to reach the 3,800 unengaged people groups worldwide with the Gospel.

Elliff, in a brief post-election interview with the Florida Baptist Witness, the newsjournal of the Florida Baptist Convention, admitted there can be confusion about the role of Southern Baptist churches in relation to support of the Cooperative Program, which provides support to IMB while the IMB is asking churches at the same time to partner with them.

"Hearing me say that we want to involve churches in no way means that I want to diminish the emphasis on the Cooperative Program," Elliff told the Witness. "Part of the value the IMB can add to the whole equation is how [churches] can pray for and strategize and reach with and partner with us to reach into these dark arenas where there are unengaged people groups."



**PRAYING FOR NEW LEADER** — Trustees of the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention and others gather around Tom and Jeannie Elliff to pray for them after Tom Elliff's unanimous March 16 election as the new IMB president during the trustees' meeting in Dallas. Soon after his election, Elliff issued a strong endorsement of the Cooperative Program. (BP photo)

As churches are engaged, "they begin to see the value of the IMB, they begin to see the value of the Cooperative Program," said Elliff, further noting that the SBC's six seminaries and the North American Mission Board are "certainly part of this equation. They're all essential in terms of reaching people, in reaching the unreached."

However, Elliff said, "I do believe that it is unrealistic to believe that we will receive enough money through the CP and the Lottie Moon Christmas offering to send enough missionaries out in the world to take care of the task. Churches are going to have to be a part of the equation. There is no way we are going to employ enough people to do this."

David Uth, an IMB trustee and senior pastor of First Church in Orlando, said he shares Elliff's desire to reach the unengaged people groups with the Gospel and is encouraged by his affirmation of the Cooperative Program.

"I think it's going to be imperative for us to participate together in the Cooperative Program," Uth, who also is president of the Florida Baptist Convention, told the Witness.

"That may look different in the days to come than it does today or it has in the past, but if the effect is that we are able to do more to reach the nations, that we are able to do more to disciple the nations, then 'hallelujah,' that's the goal."

"I think some of the changes that we see are simply a result of our times and a result

of the changing environment of churches, the landscape of our churches, [and] the landscape of our world," Uth said.

Calling the Cooperative Program a "time-honored" way to engage the nations, Uth said everything is subject to adaptation but he does not agree with decreasing CP support in order to increase support for mission partnerships or offerings.

"Increase them all," he said.

When Uth was elected as president of the Florida convention last November, he challenged Florida Baptist churches to follow the example of his church which promised to increase its giving to the Cooperative Program by at least a quarter of a percent.

"I've also proposed at our church that we ramp up our missions giving," he said.

First Church, Orlando, gave an unprecedented \$5.6 million in donations and pledges in a spontaneous offering March 12-13 for the homeless, which Uth described as a visible declaration of the congregation's willingness to give sacrificially even in a poor economy.

"It's not about, 'I'm going to give to this, but not that.' I think it's more about, 'We're going to give more and we're going to give through more channels perhaps, but we are going to give more,'" Uth said.

"I think the... most important thing is that we engage the nations and that we are able to be effective and have the greatest impact starting here and [going to] the nations."





## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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# The wonder of the Cooperative Program

It's human nature to grow accustomed to conveniences that have been around since before most of us were born. Virtually all of us grew up with a private-line telephone in our homes, but our great-grandparents were no less than amazed at the wires and handsets that transmitted their voices over party-line connections to distant locations at the speed of electricity. In contrast, young people today can't imagine a time when the ubiquitous cell phone didn't exist and "Internet" wasn't even a word in the English language.

We tend to take for granted those things that seem to have been in wide use forever, if only because our frame of reference is so short. We forget that Disneyland, antibiotics, satellites, NASCAR, air conditioning, jet flight, fiber optics, and literally thousands of other items we use every day were invented and commercialized within the last 100 years — and some in a much shorter time frame than that. It just seems that life has always been this easy and everything has been taken care of for us.

So it is with the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' all-encompassing funding system that has made us one of the

strongest Great Commission-centered organizations in the history of Christianity. It has worked so well for so long that we take it for granted. We shouldn't.

In the beginning — of the Southern Baptist Convention, that is — many groups and entities approached individual churches and appealed for financial support for their individual ministries. This was called the "societal method," which proved tiresome to church congregations who found themselves listening to just about as many financial appeals as sermons. The societal method often resulted in undue competition among missions groups who were all chasing a limited number of dollars. It created winners and losers, and depended too much on exaggeration and emotional manipulation in order to acquire those precious few available dollars.

Disciple-makers know great joys. We also know great heartaches, but sometimes it's the people who bring you the greatest joy who eventually cause you the greatest heartache.

Perhaps you've been in my shoes. You led someone to Christ, and you faithfully sought to pour your life into them. You disciplined them to the best of your ability. You welcomed them into your home. You sought to live an exemplary life before them. After a period of time, they turned around and went back to their old life. They left you and your church.

You prayed for them. You pleaded with them. It was all to no avail. They fell back into their former worldliness and disappeared. Week after week, their absence shouts at you: "You failed them. You mistook their initial enthusiasm for true conversion. What kind of minister are you? You couldn't keep them on the narrow path. See what happens when you open your heart and life to someone?"

Eventually, God brings another person along for you to disciple but you find this time that it's just a little harder to pour your life into them. It's harder to give your all when it comes to their growth and discipleship. You don't verbalize your thoughts, but your heart says: "What's the



The 75 Million Campaign was introduced to Southern Baptists in 1919, conceived as a way to provide in one package the funding for all missions and ministries from the local church through the state Baptist conventions and ultimately to the Southern Baptist Convention. The 75 Million Campaign didn't achieve that lofty goal, but it provided the practical base that led to the development of the Cooperative Program in 1925.

The Cooperative Program proved to be a roaring success, and continues today. It represents nothing less than the remarkable joining together of individual Baptists, churches, state Baptist conventions, and the Southern Baptist Convention — each a separate and independent entity — to accomplish the Great Commission as enunciated by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20.

Here's how it works. An individual church member provides a monetary gift to his/her church (the tithe). The church body then decides how much of the collective gifts will be retained for that church's missions activities, and they send the remainder to their state Baptist convention. Representatives of the churches in "friendly cooperation" with the state convention, called messengers, meet together and decide how much of the funds sent by churches will be retained for state missions. Those messengers send the remainder to the Southern Baptist Convention, where another set of messengers from the churches meets to decide how Southern Baptist missions will be funded.

Since the inception of the Cooperative Program, Mississippi Baptists have given a breathtaking total of \$830,000,000 to the Cooperative Program. The total for the first year (1925) was \$209,404. The first year to top \$1,000,000 came in 1952. It took 28 years (1980) to reach \$10,000,000, and only ten years more (1990) to reach \$20,000,000. Thirty million dollars was achieved in 2002, and the all-time record was set in 2008, with \$35,088,617 given. (Source: www.cpmmissions.net)

Glory to God! May Mississippi Baptists, and Southern Baptists on an even larger scale, continue to be found faithful in helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus through our sacrificial support for the Cooperative Program — and may we never, never take it for granted.

## GUEST OPINION:

### Keep on discipling

By Trevin Wax  
Nashville



use of pouring your life into them if they wind up like the other? What if they let you down too? What if they are only here for a season?"

You are not alone. The Apostle Paul once counted Demas as a fellow worker but in Paul's last letter, he tells Timothy, "Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" (2 Timothy 4:10). It's not hard to read between the lines and sense Paul's sorrow. He wants to see Timothy (at least partly) because Demas has deserted him.

Of course, Paul's biggest concern is that Demas' soul is in peril. His former disciple's love for the world is a demonstration of his lack of love for God. Make no mistake, Paul is concerned with Demas' soul and destiny but that's not all

that grieves the apostle. Paul needs companionship, partnership, and encouragement, so he tells Timothy to come to him soon. Paul is saying, "I need you, Timothy. Demas is gone."

In other words, "It hurts. Bad." In that moment of grief, you've got two choices. The first choice is to let your hurt turn into bitterness. The root of bitterness will keep you from giving yourself to the next person God brings your way. Bitterness constructs a wall around your heart in order to guard you from future hurt. Go this direction, and you will never have another Demas with which to deal — but you won't ever raise up a Titus, either.

The other choice is to stay grounded in the Gospel, the only news that brings joy in the midst of pain. That's what Paul

does. He doesn't turn bitter. He doesn't deny his sorrow. Instead, he leans on other partners in the Gospel and tells them, "I need you."

Armed with faith in the power of the Gospel and confidence that God's plan cannot be thwarted, Paul moves forward. He keeps making plans. "Bring the parchments. Bring Mark too. Bring my cloak." Hurt or no hurt, Paul maintains a steadfast joy in the sovereignty of God as he keeps on pursuing the kingdom and proclaiming the Gospel.

Pray for your Demas. Weep over him. Beg God for him, but don't let Demas steal your joy. Don't let Demas rob you of your passion for discipling others. God will continue to bring people to you. The reason you can keep working is because the Gospel never stops. People like Demas will come and go.

Yes, your next disciple may be a Demas too; but it also could be that the next one is your Timothy.

Wax is editor of TGM (Theology-Gospel-Mission), a small-group curriculum being developed by LifeWay Christian Resources. He has served in pastoral roles in Baptist churches in the U.S. and Romania. This column first appeared at TrevinWax.com, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

# NAMB sending out 81 new missionaries

BRANDON, Fla. (BP) — The North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention commissioned 81 new missionaries and chaplains at a commissioning service attended by some 800 people at First Church in Brandon, Fla., on March 20.

In his first-ever missionary commissioning sermon, Larry Wynn, NAMB's new vice president for evangelism, drew the crowd's applause when he looked out over the pews of missionaries and told them, "You are the real heroes."

"You are sacrificing to go where God is calling you. You're leaving family, friends, familiar surroundings, your comfort zone, and the things you love, to go and make a difference. We're going to reach North America because of men and women like you," Wynn said.

Arnold and Teresa Wong were commissioned as Mission Service Corps (MSC) missionaries for church planting in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada. The Wongs formerly were missionaries to China with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, based in Richmond, Va.

"We'll be planting churches among the 60,000 Mandarin-speaking Chinese in the Richmond Hill area," Wong said, noting that "99.9% of them are non-Christians. They've never been exposed to the Gospel. It's a challenge to make them understand the Gospel."

"First, we have to be their friends because being from communist China, they're suspicious of other people. They have to trust us first. We have to win the right to share the Gospel."

Wong said the Mandarin Chinese to whom he'll be ministering — highly educated professionals such as computer experts and accountants — are basically amoral and don't understand the sacrificial, unconditional love of Christ and Christians.

Among those also commissioned was U.S. Navy chaplain Stephen Griffin, 30, and his wife Julie of Portsmouth, Va. Stationed at Norfolk Naval Station, Griffin soon will leave Julie and their two-month-old daughter Tierzah for active duty in Afghanistan where he will minister to U.S. Marines.

"Julie and I prayed and cried over my assignment but finally we just came to the conclusion that it's an opportunity God is putting out there for us. We just said, 'Roger that, God, we'll do it,' but we're sober about the difficulties."

Julie and Tierzah will stay behind in Portsmouth during her husband's six-month deployment.

Kyle Yocum was commissioned as a NAMB US/C2 missionary based in Peoria, Ill., where the 26-year-old single will combine church planting and evangelism in an effort to plant a new collegiate church in the area, the home of Bradley University.

"I've been looking forward to being commissioned," Yocum said. "It's nice to talk to other missionaries who are going through the same things you are — to know you're not out there by yourself — and it's wonderful to have people who don't even know you to pray for you. That's totally empowering and reassuring."



**PRAYER FOR MISSIONS** — Wanda Lee (at podium), executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention in Birmingham, leads a special prayer as hundreds of members of First Church in Brandon, Fla., lay hands on 81 new missionaries commissioned March 20 by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Alpharetta, Ga. (BP photo)

Edward and Donna Villarreal were commissioned as Nehemiah Church Planting missionaries in Salinas, Ca. They've planted His House Christian Fellowship, ministering to a hardcore group of unchurched bikers and gang members who come with their addictions, tattoos, and body piercings.

"Because of the hard lives they've lived, they also come with hard hearts," Villarreal said. "Before we get them, they're heavy into clubbing and partying. They try to be family guys through the week but party all weekend. I started going after the men because if you can get them into a men's group, you can get their families."

He started by forming a house church that grew to 30 members, baptizing new believers in an apartment complex's hot tub. The church now meets in another church's building for free. About 50 people attend His House Christian Fellowship on a typical Sunday.

Betty Barham Newsom was one of the new missionaries, but she stood out. Revealing she was 81 years old, Newsom left the applauding congregation of 800 in both awe and surprise as one of the oldest MSC missionaries ever commissioned by NAMB.

Based in Brookhaven, Ms., Newsom drives a seven-county circuit in southwest Mississippi, mobilizing churches to get involved in and to support the Woman's Missionary Union, Cooperative Program, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, and mission education.

"This is what I want to do because of my love for the Lord Jesus and His love for me," Newsom said in her Mississippi drawl. "Last year in this area, I went to 44 different churches, large and small."

North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell, serving his first year as head of NAMB, thanked First Church, Brandon, for hosting the Send North America commissioning celebration and for the church's "weekly investments to plant churches across North America."

"We in the South think everywhere is like us," Ezell said. "In Florida, there is one church for every 6,800 people but in New York, there's only one church for 59,000 people. In New Jersey, there's one church for 76,000 people and in Canada, there's only one church for every 123,000 people."

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

Southern Baptists in Santee, Ca., minister to the unchurched in their community after the shootings at Santana High School. James Jackson, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated Pathways Community Church, was among the wounded.

### 20 years ago

A small New Testament sent through the mail opens the door for two Southern Baptist evangelists to lead Manuel Noriega to profess faith in Christ. Noriega, deposed leader of Panama, says he became a Christian on May 15, 1990, while serving a federal sentence in Miami.

### 50 years ago

Heart disease is identified as the number one killer of Baptist ministers in 1960. About 57% of pastoral deaths are attributed to this disease.



## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND  
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



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By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
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 NGMDY VIPX URPX  
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BGVH CGME: QXH

Clue: B = J

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Four: Forty-three

## CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

Prayer is our communication with God. It is not just a mental exercise. In fact, it is our communicating with the Creator and Him with us. However, as we pray it is important to understand that God's communication with us may come in the shape of Spirit-directed impressions, creative thoughts and heavenly assurance that He is with us. It is never without the undergirding and the framework of the Word of God.

Some years ago there was a book written that was titled, *Conversations With God*. It was not a Christian book so much as it was an author's musings about talking to God. The responses that he received from God were in the same vein. They were just musings of what he thought about God. For instance, one of the things the author said was that in talking with God that God told him, "What you think is what I think." The problem with that reasoning is that it is certainly anything but biblically sound.

God never tells us that our thoughts are His thoughts. When we pray, we should always keep doing so in the context of the revealed Word of God in Scripture. We can be wrong, while God's Word is never in error. That kind of warped thinking about



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

## Prayer Points

praying leads me to share three important truths about our conversations with God in prayer.

**God's thoughts are not always our thoughts.** In fact, the whole story of Scripture and beyond is that everywhere you look in the society in which we live is a reminder that God does not think like we think. Isaiah says that God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways (Isa. 55:8)." We must keep that in mind. If our thoughts were God's

thoughts, God would be as corrupt as we are. His character would be filled with all of the wrong, evil, hate, and bitterness that can creep into our lives. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. He sees, speaks, and responds in grace, love, and mercy. He understands how destructive our sinfulness can be.

**Our thoughts are to be shaped by God's thoughts.** It is the call from God and the intent of God that we be reshaped by divine thinking. Our prayer life should never be one that simply wants to

pull God into our arena so that He will be like us. We are to walk with Him in the light of His Word in a way that would allow Him to shape and frame a new and redeemed thought life in us.

**Our God-guided thoughts shape everything about us.** Scripture says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7)." Our actions, our attitudes, and our aspirations all grow out of the seedbed of our thoughts. Therefore, it is imperative that we not just fill our minds and our hearts with thoughts that are untethered from the truth of God's Word. Scripture clearly says in the words of the Psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Ps. 119:11)."

As you talk with God, listen to Him as He guides you. Look in His Word for affirmation that the path you are following is centered in His thoughts and His will.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## STAFF CHANGES

Raymond Road Church, Jackson, has called Cindy Sansing to serve as children's minister. Her previous place of service was Liberty Church, Flowood.

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**PLEASANT HILL BAPTIST CHURCH IN NEW ALBANY, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC.** Please send resumes to Larry Chism, 1564 State Hwy 30 E. New Albany, Ms. 38652-9619.

**THRASHER BAPTIST CHURCH IN PRENTISS COUNTY IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER.** Resumes can be submitted to Music Minister Search Committee, 200 CR 1040, Booneville, MS 38829 or emailed to [dougrakestraw@yahoo.com](mailto:dougrakestraw@yahoo.com).

**LOOKING FOR A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER** at a small church in the Hattiesburg area. If you are interested please e-mail your resume to [Lisamapp@hotmail.com](mailto:Lisamapp@hotmail.com).

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF STONEWALL, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH.** Interested candidates need to submit a resume and a DVD if possible to FBC, Stonewall P.O. Box 1178, Stonewall, MS 39363. Any questions call 601-659-7607.

**SELF CREEK SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH, OKTIBBEHA COUNTY, IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR.** E-mail resume to: [bandcutler@aol.com](mailto:bandcutler@aol.com) or mail to 2795 Brown Road, Starkville Ms. 39759

# THE BAPTIST RECORD

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Church celebrates storied CP legacy

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

Many churches have legacies, be it the long tenure of a popular pastor, a history of consistent numerical growth, a stance it took in the community, or simply how long it has been in existence. For First Church, Winona, that legacy includes a decades-long commitment to Cooperative Program (CP) giving.

First Winona is probably best known in the Southern Baptist Convention as being the home church of Arthur Flake. Flake's seminal work, *Building a Standard Sunday School*, which encompasses "Flake's Formula," has long been the foundation of Sunday School work among Southern Baptists. These days, however, First Church, Winona, is noted for its aggressive ministry through the Cooperative Program.

Aubrey Boone has been a member of First Church, Winona, for many years and has long been a champion for CP. "Over 50 years ago we decided that the church was a missions-minded church, and agreed to give 15% of our undesignated offerings to the Cooperative Program. Our goal was to increase that by one percent a year until we reached 50%. For a long time we gave one-half percent (more each year). We've never reached that 50% goal — you know how Baptists are. It went along real good for a long time, but over the last several years we haven't talked about it like we should have."

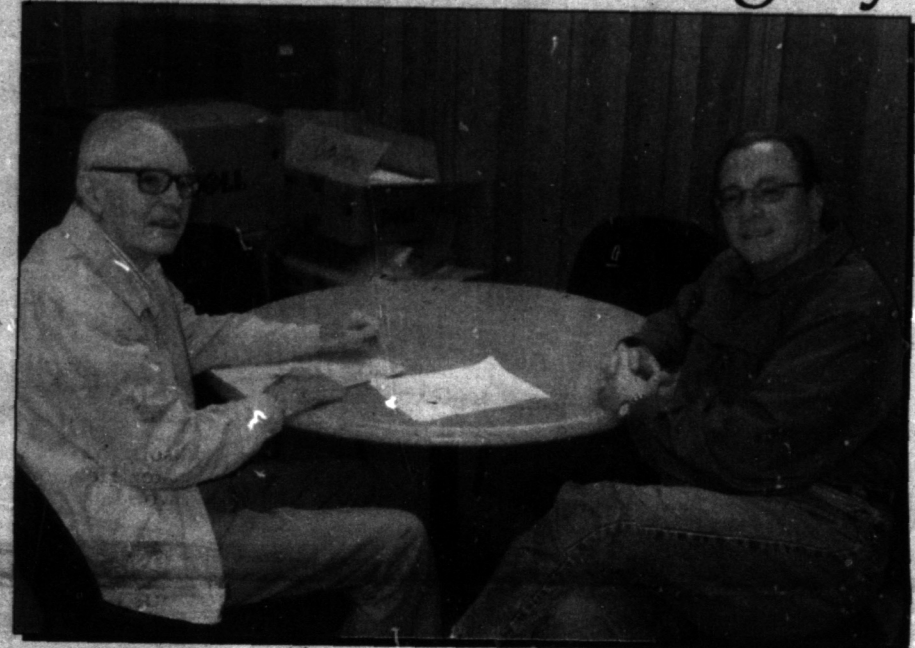
In 2009, the church gave 27.3% of undesignated gifts to CP. In 2011, 30.25% has been set aside for CP.

Dorothy Box has been a part of First Church, Winona, for 80 years. "My mother had me on cradle roll when I was two weeks old," she said. "We had gotten up to 32.5% Cooperative Program giving at one time."

"There were a lot of us who didn't really understand what the Cooperative Program was about," said Glenn Bourne, the church's chairman of deacons. "We knew it was about missions, but one of the things many of us didn't realize is that here in the state (through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board) we had assets galore funded by the Cooperative Program that we never took advantage of to do ministry in the local area here. Several of us have been made aware of this, and that has made us extremely loyal to the Cooperative Program."

"You can't be loyal to something unless you completely understand it, so when we got involved in several things and saw how the money was being used, I came back with a whole different perspective on what we were funding and what we weren't taking advantage of."

"I remember when I joined the church in 1996. I was walking up the steps out there, and I teared up because I saw the percentage the church was giving to the



PLANNING THE FUTURE — Aubrey Boone (left) and Glenn Bourne, laymen at First Church, Winona, discuss the need for Cooperative Program promotion in their church. The church currently gives 30.25% of its undesignated gifts to CP. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Cooperative Program. I thought, 'You're walking the walk and talking the talk.'"

"I had a pretty passionate discussion with a deacon about six weeks ago," said Bourne, "and he was talking about some choices that might need to be made concerning the Cooperative Program. I said, 'Let me tell you something. When the choice comes down to cutting on the lights in the building, that's the time we'll have to sit down and talk about this. Until then, you can forget about even bringing it up.' I might have overstepped my bounds, but right now we're far removed from that."

"One of the reasons I'm so thankful for the Cooperative Program is because I can remember when the missionaries would have to come around to the church and raise money," said Boone. "The schools had to come around to raise money, too, and the ones that had the best speech and the ones that looked the best got the money. Then God gave us the Cooperative Program. Then none of them would have to spend their time and money coming around to the churches. We could pool all of it together through the Cooperative Program and fund all of it. I can't conceive of anybody not wanting to take advantage of that."

"This all came about with the envelopes and the giving through Sunday School," said Box. "I remember when the deacons had to go around and knock on doors every Monday to collect money to pay the preacher. After the Cooperative Program, people were aware of what was needed and they gave. It's a

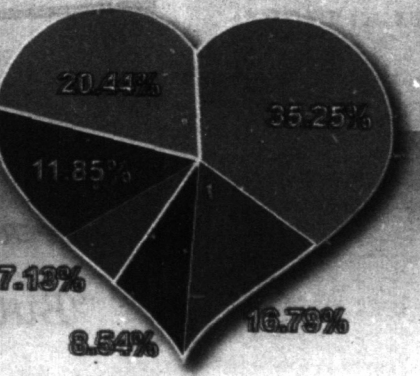
blessing. I believe that. I believe it's why our church has survived to this point."

The group stressed the need to continue to promote the ministry of the Cooperative Program.

"We just need for folks to be made aware of these things. Some people have the idea that giving to the church is something they can or can't do. They don't realize the benefit they get from giving," said Boone. "As long as I have anything to say about it, we'll continue giving to the Cooperative Program."

## 2011 COOPERATIVE PROGRAM MISSION BUDGET

### MISSISSIPPI'S HEARTBEAT FOR MISSIONS



Global Missions/SBC	\$11,633,185
Christian Education	\$6,747,000
Church Growth Ministries	\$3,906,630
State Benevolent Institutions	\$2,352,767
State Missions	\$6,541,024
Executive Leadership and Communication	\$2,819,339

GRAND TOTAL = \$33,001,945

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# 2010 COOPERATIVE PROGRAM CENTURY CLUB GIVING

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORIES BASED ON CHURCH OFFERINGS REPORTED ON THE 2009-2010 ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE. COOPERATIVE PROGRAM GIFTS ARE ACTUAL RECEIPTS POSTED BY THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION BOARD FROM OCTOBER 2009-SEPTEMBER 2010.

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 and below

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
NOKUBEE/MASHULAVILLE	23,505.00
PANOLA/PHARSALIA	24,131.00
CHOCTAW/CROSSROADS	21,368.00
MID-DELTA/MOUNT VERNON	18,102.00
COV-JEFF DAVIS/ANTIOCH	24,828.00
CLARKE/PLEASANT GROVE	22,281.00
KEMPER/BLUFF SPRINGS	15,000.00
MARSHALL/CAVCE	24,848.00
METRO/LEARNED	15,365.00
JACKSON/FBC ORANGE GROVE	16,988.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$25,000 - \$39,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
UNION CO/MYRTLE	33,807.00
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/WAKE FOREST	28,068.00
CAMPBELL/SILOH	35,288.00
LAWRENCE/SHALOM	25,914.00
KEMPER/CENTER RIDGE	35,667.00
LEBANON/BEACON	32,164.00
YAZOO/ROCKY SPRINGS	34,868.00
MONROE/SPURGE	38,951.00
YAZOO/EDNEY	38,710.00
PRENTISS/WEST SIDE	28,314.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$40,000 - \$54,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
WEBSTER/NEW HOPE	53,582.00
NEWTON/ROCK BRANCH	53,150.00
GULF COAST/PERKINSTON	52,863.00
CALHOUN/OLDTOWN	41,061.00
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/NEW MONTPELIER	48,891.00
MID-DELTA/LINN	44,780.00
LAUDERDALE/CENTER GROVE	54,980.00
SMITH/CONCORD	52,148.00
WINSTON/DRY CREEK	42,886.00
PEARL RIVER/NEW LIFE	54,048.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$55,000 - \$74,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
CALHOUN/SABOUGLA	66,780.00
CARROLL/LIBERTY	62,960.00
YAZOO/DONK GROVE	60,904.00
WEBSTER/OP LAKE GROVE	62,789.00
MARION/EMMAHUEL	71,000.00
WAYNE/RIVERSIDE	68,285.00
LAWRENCE/CAMEL	70,638.00
JACKSON/KNEELE AVE	75,428.00
CLARKE/PINE GROVE	71,285.00
MISSISSIPPI/MT VERNON	63,886.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$75,000 - \$99,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
WINSTON/CALAWAY	98,238.00
CLARKE/SPRINTA	95,045.00
PANOLA/CAPE STATION	96,021.00
MISSISSIPPI/CROSBY	98,008.00
HUNTER/BEALAH	88,728.00
ATLANTA/MCCOY	88,121.00
SHARPE/BEALAH VALLEY PARK	88,421.00
SHARPE/DOBBY	79,538.00
CHOCTAW/WEB	94,988.00
NEWARK/FBC NOLA	82,712.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$100,000 - \$149,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
ADAMS/CLIFF TEMPLE	149,775.00
NESHOMA/SPRING CREEK	130,032.00
MID-DELTA/SKENE	133,884.00
CALHOUN/PLEASANT HILL	122,785.00
SCOTT/BRANCH	148,382.00
NEWTON/SULPHUR SPRINGS	139,508.00
TISHOMINGO/NEW PROSPECT	142,925.00
RANKIN/ROCK HILL	110,518.00
LAFAYETTE/COLLEGE HILL HEIGHTS	137,438.00
JACKSON/RIVERSIDE	149,571.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$150,000 - \$249,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
SCOTT/SPRINGFIELD	212,914.00
PONTOTOC/ECRU	243,077.00
BENTON-TIPPAH/DUMAS	213,560.00
LINCOLN/NEW PROSPECT	204,534.00
PEARL RIVER/CENTRAL	242,422.00
HOLMES/FBC LEXINGTON	240,554.00
RANKIN/PUCKETT	228,648.00
LEBANON/RAWLS SPRINGS	205,764.00
RANKIN/CATO	199,977.00
ADAMS/HIGHLAND	242,179.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$250,000 - \$499,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
RANKIN/PELAHATCHIE	458,823.00
PERRY/FBC RICHTON	407,822.00
PIKE/CENTRAL	391,738.00
COV-JEFF DAVIS/FBC COLLINS	388,961.00
WAYNE/PLEASANT GROVE	321,199.00
LAFAYETTE/ANCHOR	481,805.00
GEORGE-GREENE/BARTON	333,556.00
LAWRENCE/NEW HEBRON	308,137.00
COV-JEFF DAVIS/WHITESAND	317,510.00
LAUDERDALE/WESTWOOD	436,141.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$500,000 - \$999,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
MONTGOMERY/FBC WINONA	689,878.00
LAUDERDALE/FBC COLLINSVILLE	828,283.00
CHICKASAW/FBC HOUSTON	870,191.00
METRO/HILLCREST	982,652.00
SIMPSON/FBC MAGEE	997,411.00
LAWRENCE/MONTECELLO	744,296.00
JONES/INDIAN SPRINGS	783,004.00
RANKIN/MCLAURIN HEIGHTS	680,908.00
MARION/NORTH COLUMBIA	686,542.00
ALCORN/WHEELER GROVE	728,264.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$1,000,000 and above

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
METRO/FBC JACKSON	10,238,618.00
METRO/BROADMOOR	8,486,887.00
METRO/MORRISON HEIGHTS	5,842,011.00
LEE/HAWESBURG	4,520,275.00
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/FAIRVIEW	3,647,308.00
LEE/CALAWAY	2,283,979.00
RANKIN/FBC BRANDON	4,107,177.00
METRO/FBC MADISON	5,321,498.00
METRO/COLONIAL HEIGHTS	4,034,780.00
NORTH CENTRAL/EMMAHUEL	2,193,048.00

Dear Giver,  
Thank you so much for your commitment to tithing. Your generous offering through the Cooperative Program provided support for a loving missionary family to live in our village. They blessed us with staple food items, clothing for our children, and books for our school. Their kindness intrigued us, and we began to attend prayer meetings in their home. Over several months, we began to learn more about Christianity and the Bible. The missionaries taught us Jesus' love by their actions. My wife, daughters, son, and I are new believers and encouraging our friends to attend the missionaries' home church. Thank you! Joseph, Age 43, Congo, Africa

Dear Giver,

Thank you for your heart for giving. Your church offering is providing a scholarship for me to attend seminary. I am a wife and mother of two small children, and without this scholarship, it would not be possible for me to go back to school. I am working toward my master's degree in marriage and family counseling, and look forward to helping hurting families and individuals. Thank you. Marissa, Age 34, Mill Valley, California

Dear Giver,

Thank you for giving an offering to your church. Your money helps my church provide a safe place for kids like me [to go] after school. We play fun games, make neat artwork, and always get a healthy snack and supper. The teachers tell us that God loved us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. Without our after-school program, a lot of my friends would be by themselves until their moms got off work. Your offering gives us a place to go where we feel loved. Thank you! Kayra, Age 9, The Bronx, New York

Dear Giver,

Thank you for your tithe. Through the Cooperative Program, you have provided funding for retired ministers and their wives who could otherwise not afford high-skilled nursing care at the Baptist Home. After pastoring 40 years in a small, country church, I don't have enough money saved to provide the care my wife needed when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Your gift is blessing us with a nice place to live as we continue to age together. Thank you! Bill, Age 81, Okmulgee, Oklahoma



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

# ...Thank You

"But generous people plan to do what is generous and they stand firm in their generosity." Isaiah 32:8



## 2011 MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET

### Global Missions/SBC

17.50%	International Mission Board	\$5,966,506
7.98%	North American Mission Board	\$2,720,727
7.76%	Theological Education	\$2,645,719
1.19%	SBC Operations	\$405,722
0.57%	Ethics/Religious Liberty Comm.	\$194,338
<b>35.00%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,933,012</b>

### Christian Education

8.99%	Mississippi College	\$3,064,543
6.85%	William Carey University	\$2,335,089
3.32%	Blue Mountain College	\$1,131,424
1.12%	Board of Ministerial Education	\$381,678
0.17%	Education Commission	\$58,473
<b>20.45%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,971,205</b>

### State Benevolent Institutions

2.84%	Church Retirement & Protection	\$900,000
1.96%	Baptist Children's Village	\$669,902
1.26%	MS Baptist Foundation	\$435,045
1.07%	Christian Action / Commission	\$365,764
0.21%	Historical Commission	\$72,736
0.03%	MS Baptist Health Systems	\$10,000
<b>7.39%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,453,447</b>

### State Missions

6.03%	Collegiate Ministry	\$2,056,948
2.84%	Women's Missionary Union	\$900,201
2.10%	Men's Ministry	\$715,964
1.88%	Missions Mobilization	\$640,436
1.56%	Mission Strategy	\$533,097
1.37%	Church Planting	\$462,919
0.57%	Stewardship	\$297,598
<b>16.45%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,612,963</b>

### Executive Leadership & Communication

2.41%	Business/Financial Services	\$821,209
1.94%	The Baptist Record	\$626,505
1.48%	Executive Administration	\$502,977
1.30%	Communication Services	\$442,637
0.92%	Computer Information Services	\$314,774
0.42%	Convention & Convention Comm.	\$142,775
<b>8.37%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,850,877</b>

### Church Growth Ministries

2.45%	Discipleship & Family Ministry	\$836,580
2.10%	Capital Needs	\$715,000
2.85%	Sunday School	\$968,922
1.60%	Church Music	\$544,024
1.36%	Church Growth	\$469,172
1.20%	Pastor/Leadership Development	\$408,661
0.91%	Evangelism	\$311,747
0.85%	Church-Minister Relations	\$282,632
<b>12.54%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,273,718</b>

**GRAND TOTAL**  
**\$34,094,322**

## Shiloh has heart for missions

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

Shiloh Church is located in the small community of Sontag in Lawrence County, northwest of Monticello. In this rural Mississippi setting, the church has participated in significant ministries over the years and has flourished. In the belief of the pastor, that's because of a commitment to missions — especially through the Cooperative Program.

The church has been ministering to the community since 1845. Andy Fullington is the pastor. "God is doing some great things here," Fullington said. "He is moving in the hearts of people and they really seem on fire for God right now... I think a revival has broken out."

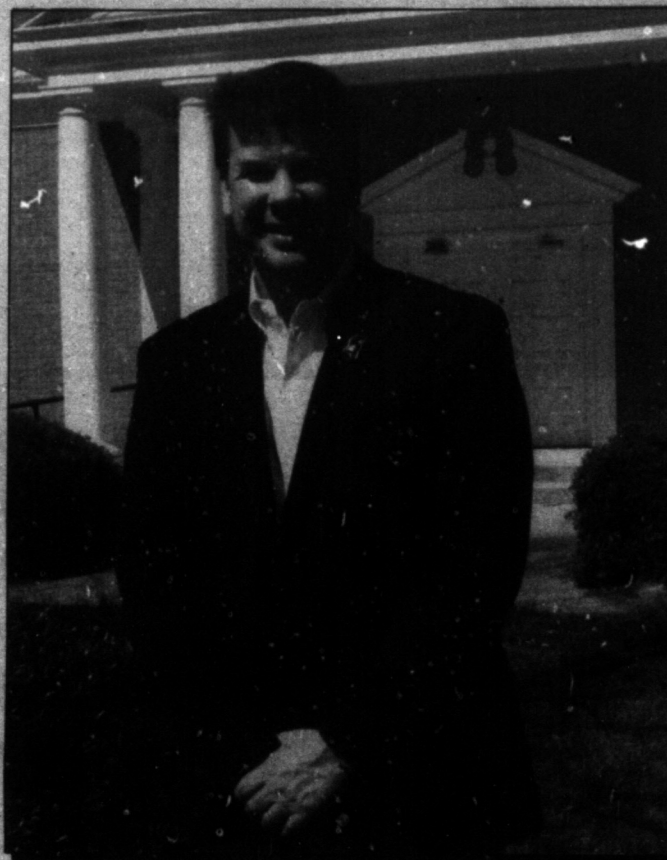
The church recently dedicated a new fellowship hall. "It's been a privilege just to be a part of what God is doing here," Fullington said. "This April, I will have been pastor two years, but I did a six month interim prior to that. This is my first pastorate, my first church, and the people really stepped out on faith when they called me. We're kind of — how should I word this? — in the middle of the country, but people come from all over."

"Missions are at the heart of Shiloh, and have always been at the heart of Shiloh," Fullington continued, "not only in just giving, but in serving. We still have a great program for RAs, GAs, and Acteens. We'll have in the high 80's (in attendance) on Wednesdays, and Sunday School will run from 110-120. Discipleship training will run from 70-80 on average."

The church has been giving more than 20% to the Cooperative Program for years. "I looked back to the 1980's to see when the church was really giving. In the late 80's and early 90's, we were giving 23% - 24%. From 1995 to 2006, the church gave 25%. The church went through a period without a pastor and things got a little rough, but even then the church was able to give 20% and this doesn't include Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, and other special offerings."

In recent times the church has maintained giving to Cooperative Program at 27.5%. "We've been able to do that even in the middle of a building campaign," said Fullington. "The Lord is working through the people here. It's very humbling. We're mostly just middle class, hard working folks who believe in giving generously to the Lord."

"Even while we've been maintaining the 20%-plus level of giving, we've gone through three building programs," Fullington stated. "One was the educational wing which was paid off in five years. Another was the remodeling of our nursery, and that's been paid off, and a remodeling of our sanctu-



A PASTOR'S HEART — Andy Fullington has been pastor of Shiloh Church, Sontag, for two years. Fullington states that "missions have always been at the heart of Shiloh." (Photo by Tony Martin)

ary, which is paid off. In a lot of churches, missions are one of the first areas cut when the church is building but we've been able to maintain at least 20% for well over 20 years."

Fullington received the call to ministry about three years ago. He started seminary at the New Orleans extension branch. He owns a landscaping business. His wife Donna teaches at Hillcrest School in Jackson and the couple has two children.

Fullington is bivocational. "As long as the Lord allows me to be bivocational, I'll keep the landscaping business," Fullington said, "but the work of the church always takes precedence."

The church has been loving and faithful, according to Fullington. He commutes daily from Terry. "That has been good, because our youth pastor has been able to take advantage of the parsonage," he said. "He was able to come on board after I'd been here a month. He's the first youth pastor this church has had."

The church has a huge number of children, according to Fullington. "We had 125 in Vacation Bible School. When you drive down these county roads, you don't see that many houses, but they just come out of the woods."

As evidence of the mission-mindedness of the church, Fullington said in addition to the CP giving, they have an active men's ministry that has

done local missions and ministry work. "I want our folks to be able to step out on the national level in doing missions," Fullington said. "We have had two missionaries come out of this church, and the church has been active in other local missions. Our ladies are very involved in WMU, and some on the state level. Betty Newsom is the Region 7 coordinator for the Missions Service Corps. Shane Mason, also a missionary, is trying to get back to an area in (an international mission field that is unnamed for security reasons). Several of our ladies have been involved in Honduran mission trips. Missions have been at the heart of this church."

Fullington believes part of his responsibility as pastor is to "sort of inject an excitement for missions into the church. If the pastor isn't excited about going and being involved in missions, it's going to be difficult to inspire the rest of the church."

Fullington is also a cattle farmer and has been for over 20 years. "I've come to see that it's time to slack off some in tending to cattle, and maybe it's time to tend to some sheep."



1. Byrd Memorial Preaching Award at Mississippi College



2. William Carey University board of trustees



3. Young Authors Celebration at William Carey University

### Mississippi Baptist Ministers 9th Annual Two Man Golf Scramble State Championship

May 16-17, 2011

1 p.m., Monday & 8 a.m., Tuesday  
Patrick Farms • Pearl, MS  
www.patrickfarmsgolf.com

To register, contact Rita McCollum at  
601-292-3329 or rmcollum@christianaction.com  
Registration deadline: May 9, 2011  
Cost: \$100.00 per person



## COLLEGE NEWS

1. Ben VanHorn (center) has been awarded the 2011 Byrd Memorial Preaching Award at Mississippi College. He is the son of Wayne and Terri VanHorn of Clinton. Wayne VanHorn is the dean of the MC School of Christian Studies and a former pastor in Mississippi. Congratulating Ben VanHorn are Harrell Byrd (left) of Brandon, a 1946 MC alumnus, and Burn Page, interim chairman of the MC Department of Christian Studies and director of the Institute of Christian Leadership.



4. Spirit Day At William Carey University

2. The William Carey University board of trustees (pictured) welcomed three new members during their recent meeting: Jules Eustice (front row, far left) of Biloxi, David Millican (middle row, far left) of McComb, and Eric Lindstrom (front row, far right) of Laurel.



5. Blue Mountain College NAIA Scholar-Athletes

3. More than 350 students and 75 teachers attended the 2011 Young Authors Celebration at William Carey University (WCU) in Hattiesburg. Open to first through eighth graders and their teachers, the event is designed to honor the creativity of young artists and promote lifelong reading, writing, and visual expression. Mollie Brockway of Hattiesburg, daughter of WCU faculty member David Brockway, is pictured with Curious George at the celebration.

4. The Student Government Association (SGA) of William Carey University in Hattiesburg hosted Carey Spirit Day and Tailgating Party on March 22. SGA officers serving students were (from left) Rachel Harris of Petal, Chelsey Maywalt of Carriere, Courtney Daley of Carson, and Randi Clark of Purvis.

5. A trio of women's basketball players at Blue Mountain College (BMC) in Blue Mountain have been named Division I Scholar-Athletes for 2010-11 by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). They are (from left) Jordan McCormick of Pontotoc, Joy Pierce of Cayce, and Anna Lisa Powell of Ecru. To be eligible for the recognition,

each athlete was required to post a minimum 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. BMC is the only NAIA school in Mississippi to have players selected, and also scored more placements than any other team in the Trans South Athletic Conference.

Visit us online at  
[www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org)



## REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. **New Hope Church, Foxworth:** Revival, April 2-3; Sat., fish fry 5 p.m. followed by 6:30 p.m. service; Sun. 10:30 a.m. followed by covered dish luncheon, and 6:30 p.m.; Lavern Summerlin, speaker; Mike Hulsey, music.

2. **Liberty Hill Church, Pope:** Revival, April 3-6; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, speaker; Mark Jones, music; Jay Anderson, pastor.

3. **Ephesus Church, Scott Assoc.:** Revival, April 3-6; Sun., high attendance in Sunday School 10 a.m. followed by worship 11 a.m. and pot-blessed dinner; Sun. evening 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m. Paul Smith, speaker; Danny Harrison, music; Jim Everett, pastor.

4. **Sunflower Church, Sunflower:** Revival, April 3-6; Tommy Arinder, speaker; Ronnie Cottingham, music.

5. **Tuckers Crossing Church, Jones Assoc.:** Revival, April 10-13; Rick Henson, speaker; Tim Hubbard, music; Eddie Bryant, pastor.

6. **Enon Church, Batesville:** Revival, April 17-20; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Paul Middleton, speaker; Keith Bolen, music and pastor.



# Dislocation becoming way of life for Mideast workers

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Being ready at a moment's notice to board a plane and evacuate a country is a reality for many Christian workers in North Africa and the Middle East.

Trying to share the Gospel in nations with unstable governments is difficult in the best of circumstances, but as refugees flee the crisis in Libya and other nations such as Yemen, Egypt, and Syria continue to struggle with political unrest, the task is increasingly challenging.

Though people are turning to Jesus during this time of conflict, Christian workers say the environment is far from ideal for ministry. "It really is challenging trying to minister in this climate," said Christian worker Sam Morgan (not his real name).

He and his family have served among Shia Muslims in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf since 2005. In recent weeks, they have seen an increase in political protests.

"There are news cameras everywhere," Morgan said. "If you go to downtown where everybody is protesting, and you're the only American, immediately people are attracted to you because they feel like you're there to stand behind their cause."

Some of the people Morgan meets with and ministers to

have pleaded with him to join the protests in their country, but Morgan always declines. "We're not here to fight for [that] cause," he said. "We're here to fight for the cause of Christ."

Morgan said his biggest concern is whether he and his family may have to evacuate and leave behind years of ministry at the ring of a telephone. "There have been moments... where I wonder if we're going to be on a plane tomorrow morning. One day you're in a country, the next day you're not. All those friends and that whole life you had, it's gone. It's hard," he said.

While tensions in the Middle East have been front page news in recent weeks, Morgan said political protests and conflict often are a way of life among his people group. "In our country, they burn tires every Friday, and they have since we [moved] here," he said. "Then it's over, and Saturday goes on and everybody is with their families and we move on and do our ministry."

Avoiding awkward political conversations can, at times, be



OPEN TO JESUS — As unrest across North Africa and the Middle East continues, Christian workers go about their daily lives, building relationships and showing the love of Christ even as they prepare to move at a moment's notice. The workers believe many of the people of the Arab world, some shown here in the teeming streets of an unidentified city in this undated file photo, are open to hearing about Jesus. (BP photo)

nearly impossible, said Marshall Jackson (not his real name), who has ministered to people in the Middle East for the past six years. "Their questions are often fairly pointed and opinionated," Jackson said. "Most of the time, they're not asking you to find [an answer]; they're asking you to let you know what they think. If you feel someone really pushing your buttons or you're getting hot under the collar, just walk away."

When groups from the U.S. volunteer a Mideast outreach, Christian workers advise them to avoid wearing clothing and hats with American flags or political statements on them — and above all else, don't start a political discussion.

"We're not there to convince people that American foreign policy is correct," Jackson said. "Usually [volunteers] don't have enough cultural background to handle disagreements in that culture and to do it appropriately without being overly defensive or giving someone the impression you agree with them when you don't."

The best and typically most successful way to handle difficult questions or discussions is handling them in a loving way. "Just simply say, 'but you know Americans love [the people in that country],'" Jackson said.

Ultimately, Jesus is the best example of how to handle difficult questions, he added, saying,

"None of us would be as good as Jesus [with tough questions]."

Amy Jones (not her real name) has found that the Middle Eastern women she ministers to are open to hearing about the hope Jesus can offer them. She and her husband Justin (not his real name) have worked among Middle Eastern people for more than six years.

Jones befriended a single mother, Amal (not her real name), and her 11-year-old son. Jones met Amal in 2004 through the help of Christian volunteers from the States. Amal, who is an Arab Muslim, eventually became a believer in Christ.

Life for her has been difficult. Others often look down on single mothers in that part of the world. "She has a horror story a mile long," Jones said. "She's been beaten by her brothers. She's been held at gunpoint by her neighbor. She had to evacuate during two separate times of war. She's been without a job, just barely making ends meet."

Though relating to Amal's challenges has been difficult, Jones said the two have remained friends through the years. The Joneses gave her a Bible. They've studied Scripture with her. They have occasionally bought her groceries.

Amal, in turn, taught the Joneses how to share their faith in Arabic.

Despite times of uncertainty, people's hearts throughout

North Africa and the Middle East are more open to the Gospel than ever before, Jones noted. "People are hopeless, and the things... that they've put their faith in are kind of falling apart around them," she said.

"It makes them more prone to ask questions and to seek a deeper kind of hope."

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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE Balance Grief With Hope

John 11:20-27, 32-36, 43-44

By Bobby McKay

How many gifts have you received that you can remember? Think about it. Go through the many memories you may have of birthdays, anniversaries and Christmases of yesteryear. I have a handful that I recall from my childhood and a few from recent years. I had an aunt and uncle that were in the education profession and they made it their mission that every child in the family was provided with a significant amount of school supplies each Christmas. The package would usually come in the form a large garbage bag, tied at the top with a piece of yarn. The contents typically contained the following: 5000 pieces of notebook paper, 100 pencils, 75 pens, and a book about the planets. While each of these presents were often

times needed, they were a bit unusual for a 10 year old boy that was anticipating a new football or video game.

Did you know that God gives us a strange gift as well? That gift is called grief. The package that we might not expect, is sometimes hard to unwrap, but definitely needed to heal; is grief. These next three studies will lead us through the maze of grief. For each of us to benefit fully from this study we must be honest about our own struggles and difficulties. God has blessed me with an incredible church to pastor. There is one thing I have discovered that I had not foreseen. As the Spirit moves and the church grows, something else is taking place. People are becoming more real in their struggles and heartaches. I felt led to teach a



McKay

class on grief on Wednesday nights recently. The number of those attending literally tripled. Grief is a common denominator for each of us. Grief is not the end. It is the strange gift given from above to help us cling to hope, strive for strength, and mold us into a vessel to help others. Remember that grief does not indicate a lack of faith.

There are three different responses to grief that are highlighted in these verses concerning the story of Lazarus. Each are valid in their own right. We examine each of these briefly as part of this week's lesson.

### Response #1: Intellectual

In John 11:20-27, we read of the sister duo, Mary and Martha. Martha is quick to confront Christ with her belief that He could have prevented Lazarus from dying. In her mind, Jesus was too late to make a difference. She was

processing the facts with her finite understanding. However, I must add this for your consideration. There is a word of hope in verse 21. That word is "if." "If you had been here, my brother would not have died," Martha grieved. This shows us the depth of her belief. She fully believed that if Jesus would have been present, Lazarus would have been spared from death. Some may disagree with me, but I never see an example where it is wrong for us to ask God questions. He is God. He can handle your questions.

### Response #2: Emotional

The next response to difficult times is an emotional one. The tears of the grieving are obvious in this story and it is understandable. Christians should never feel guilty for the tears we shed over loved ones. The deeper we love someone, the deeper we will grieve. It is true that we do not grieve as those without hope, but we still grieve. There have

been varying interpretations on why Jesus wept. I do not believe He wept because He could not help Lazarus. He did not weep because He was powerless over death or because He couldn't help them. He wept over their unbelief. In the same way He cried over Jerusalem. He was grieved over the lack of faith.

### Response #3: Supernatural

Not only was Jesus on time, He had the answer to their grieving hearts. His power over death is hope for all of us. What we view as an obstacle, God often views as an opportunity. This strange gift of grief affords us the option of honoring God as a witness to those around us. While it may be hard for you to realize at this moment, God is at work in your life no matter what you are going through and the future is always better than the past for the Christian.

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE Look Up to Heaven

Philippians 3:1-21 Focus 3:1, 7-21

By Cyndi Grace

I am going to be honest with you: I made great grades in high school. I have trophies for speaking contests. I was voted Most Talented and won superiors in drama tournaments, and you know what? No one really cares — even me! All those things I did are just memories; the only thing that matters is what is happening now. Many craved those 15 minutes of fame only to find the next day someone else has taken our place. Paul had some of the greatest credentials a person of his day could have but when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, none of that mattered because he had met the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Isaiah had a similar experience for we read in Isaiah 6:1... "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord" and

his life was never the same. Something happens when you see God in His glory!

This week's lesson is very close to my heart. All scripture holds great truths but I have claimed as my life verse Philippians 3:10. (Please read in your Bible.) I have been a Christian since the age of 10 and I have mostly lived a "good-girl life"...so much so that often I have called myself a recovering Pharisee! I followed all the rules and thought that was enough until one day my life began falling apart. It was during that time of deep darkness and depression that I, as Isaiah said, "saw the Lord!" I saw Him as more than a part of an organization or a duty I had to fulfill; I saw Him as He is (Holy) and myself as I was



Grace

(needing Him) and my life has never been the same. He became my all and like Paul my life's aim became to "know Him" more. The word, "know" that Paul uses in verse 10, means a deep intimate knowing...not a surface acquaintance and Paul so desired for the Philippians to not settle for having only Christ's salvation but to become intimate with Him. It is where the life abundant begins.

Paul goes on to say that he had not arrived at a point of perfection! None of us have but many of us get stuck...we get stuck in our past successes. Paul's words, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead," is not, contrary to popular belief, about forgetting the bad things in the past but rather forgetting all the successful things he had done or been. Often when I ask for testimonies, I hear what God

had done 5, 10 or even more years ago. When I ask, "What has God done in your life today?" I often get silence. That, friend, is being stuck. Knowing Jesus the way Paul understood, means that every day is a new experience in being able to recognize Him in all things, to discern His will, and to become more like Him. For this Paul pressed on "to the prize!"—his call in Christ Jesus. Paul then gently admonishes them that if they were mature, this would also be their desire. Are you pressing on or are you stuck? Ask God to give you strength to fulfill your call.

Remembering: Paul was in prison while writing these words makes them even more powerful. He faced certain death for preaching the gospel and yet his cry wasn't about becoming free of his earthly chains or living a painless life. His cry was to know Christ even more and to share in all Christ went through...the suffering, death but also the resur-

rection. Do you desire to "know" Jesus this way?

The final section of our lesson reminds us that we are just visiting this world and our eternal home is in heaven. I Peter 1:3 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you..." (NIV) We can't sing, "this world is not my home" and then we live like it is.

We must choose. Every born-again believer in Christ has a mandate to press on toward the goal but we cannot do that unless we know Jesus Christ intimately. Let today be the day that you surrender completely to Jesus! Press on, church, to know Him more!

Grace is a conference speaker and Bible teacher and is a member of First Church, Clinton.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



4. Slayden Church, Slayden



5. Hickory Grove Church, Sumrall



6. First Church, Plantersville



7. First Church, Potts Camp



1. Crestview Church, Petal, will host Friends and Family Day on April 3. Sunday School (9:45 a.m.) goal is 120 and worship service (11 a.m.) goal is 160. Pot luck luncheon will follow worship service.

2. Chunky Church, Chunky, will host a retirement reception for Wayne Campbell, pastor for 27 years, on April 3. Service/celebration will begin at 10 a.m., with church-wide fellowship lunch to follow.

3. First Church, Lumberton, will host the March 26 live webcast of Rediscover God in America featuring a number of nationally-known figures. The event is free and lunch will be available for purchase. The webcast will run from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., and the public is invited.

4. The Sanctuary Choir and Drama Team of Slayden Church, Slayden, presented The Christmas Song during the holidays. Mark Mathis, music director. The church also surpassed its goal of \$5,000 for the Lottie Moon Offering for International Missions.

5. Hickory Grove Church, Sumrall, on March 13 honored Emma Lee Broome with a luncheon in recognition of 55 years of service as church pianist.

6. Children from First Church, Plantersville, recently held a weekend retreat at Clarko State Park near Quitman. As part of the retreat, the Praise Players Handbell Choir performed at Carmel Church and Russell Church in the Meridian area.

7. First Church, Potts Camp, ordained Herbert Luther to the Gospel ministry on June 27, 2010. Pictured is Luther (left) and pastor Wayne Gullet.

8. Grace Fellowship, Hatley, on February 13 ordained four men to the Gospel ministry and four men to serve as deacons. Ordained to the ministry were Kevin Crook, Shane Lindsey, Chip Harmon, and Justin Simmons.

Ordained as deacons were Joey Umfress, Brain Duffy, Daniel Dabbs, and Tim Watson. Pictured are (front row, left to right) Umfress, Crook, Duffy, Lindsey, Dabbs, (middle row, left to right) Watson, Harmon, Jim Harrington (Monroe Association missions director), Simmons, (back row, from left) Jack Dauphin (pastor, Trinity Church) and Danny Carl

Burks (pastor, Grace Fellowship).

9. Grace Church, Philadelphia, ordained Tim Moore (center), the church's minister of music, to the Gospel ministry. Pictured are (from left) George Terry Sciple, Moore, and pastor Chester Carlisle.



8. Grace Fellowship, Hatley



9. Moore ordination at Grace Church, Philadelphia

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